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# College Literary Magazines

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## College Literary Magazines

At least 50 literary or general-interest magazines have been published for longer or shorter periods and more or less regularly in Iowa's institutions of higher education. This does not include the humorous magazines, published fitfully on many campuses, often only a jump or two ahead of the censors. Nor does it include the magazines published for alumni, either by alumni associations or college administrations.

A few Iowa colleges published, usually for short periods, journals to present the work of faculty members. One of the earliest of these was the *Iowa Classic*, conducted 1870-1875 by President John Wheeler, of Iowa Wesleyan College. The College had its own printing office, and issued the *Classic* at first in newspaper form, eight pages monthly at 50 cents a year; but in its last two years it was a 12-page quarto and was filled mainly with work furnished by the student literary societies.

Iowa State College, at Ames, offered scholarly and literary work by its faculty in its *College Quarterly* (1878-1880). Eventually various specialized technical journals were established at Ames and Iowa City to which faculty, advanced



students, alumni, and outstanding scholars from other universities were not infrequently contributors.

Among such journals at Iowa City are the *Philological Quarterly* (1922), *Iowa Business Digest* (1930), *Iowa Transit* (1890), *Iowa Publisher* (1925); and at Ames the *Journal of Parasitology* (1914), *Iowa Engineer* (1901), *Iowa State Scientist* (1948), and *Iowa Homemaker* (1921) — all of them still in course of publication.

The early student publications at Iowa colleges were an interesting lot. All began as monthlies published only during the school year. The *Vidette-Reporter*, of Iowa City, observed as late as 1884: "Of the 35 exchanges received at our office, but one is a weekly, nearly all being issued monthly." The State University of Iowa paper had become a weekly only the year before; other Iowa college papers were slow to follow its example. The *Collegian*, of Cornell College, later called the *Cornellian*, became a weekly in 1891, but continued a special monthly edition through the 1890's. Some of the older monthlies — such as the *Simpsonian* (1870), the *Drake Delphic* (1884), and the *Iowa Wesleyan* (1886) did not turn to weekly publication until after the turn of the century. Our reason for noting these changes to more frequent publication is that the monthlies relied somewhat more on literary miscellany (originating in the literary societies and English



classes) than on the news, which was the staple of the weeklies.

But many full-fledged magazines have furnished ambitious writers on Iowa campuses media for expression by the printed word. Of course the *Midland*, of Iowa City, was campus born; but both its contributors and its readers were mainly off-campus, and at one time it actually had more subscribers in California than in Iowa. A few others drew upon outside writers and enjoyed fairly wide readership support.

The *Tanager* (1925-1948) was subtitled "Grinnell College Literary Magazine" and was sponsored by the English Department, with financial backing from the College. It was a well produced monthly with an editorial board consisting of both faculty members and students. Its first editor was Wayne Gard, then an instructor in journalism at Grinnell. Contributing editors 1929-1933 were two former Grinnell students already famous in the world of letters — James Norman Hall and Ruth Suckow. The *Tanager's* pages were open to faculty, students, alumni, and off-campus writers. Among notable contributors were William Saroyan, Jay G. Sigmund, Eudora Welty, William March, and Charles Angoff. Thomas Duncan contributed some verse while he was a member of the faculty. The *Tanager* was, from beginning to end, a credit to Grinnell College.

The *Husk* was begun by the English Club of



Cornell College in 1922 as a quarterly belonging to the "little magazine" classification. It welcomes off-campus writers. Clyde (known to his affectionate students as "Toppy") Tull was long the guide of this excellent magazine and is still listed as "Adviser." And now we are authorized to announce, with some excitement, a current pregnancy at Cornell: the birth of a new quarterly is expected in March, 1964, for which the grand old name of *North American Review* has been chosen.

But without question the most distinguished "little magazine" published in Iowa under college or university auspices was *American Prefaces* (1935-1943). It was a well printed 16-page quarto with self-cover, issued by the University of Iowa under the direction of the School of Letters with the cooperation of the School of Journalism and the School of Fine Arts. Wilbur L. Schramm was its active and able editor; Paul Engle and Robert Whitehand were among the associate editors, and Norman Foerster, head of the School of Letters, was adviser. While students and faculty were well represented in the pages of *American Prefaces*, the list of famous off-campus writers whom Schramm persuaded to contribute an essay, poem, or story was imposing indeed. T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, O. E. Rolvaag, Stephen Vincent Benet, Louis Adamic, and Muriel Rukeyser were in the list. Among *American Prefaces'* distinguished Iowa writers were Edwin Ford Piper,



James Hearst, Jay G. Sigmund, and Eleanor Saltzman. Associate Editor Paul Engle had already published two volumes of poetry when *American Prefaces* was founded, and his verse enriches the pages of the whole file. The *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Saturday Evening Post* did some poaching on the Iowa campus, and Editor Schramm's distinguished short stories appeared in those magazines in the 1940's. Grant Wood had a little essay in the first number of the *Prefaces*, and a number of his pictures were reproduced in excellent halftone prints in several later issues.

The earlier *Iowa Literary Magazine* (1924-1930), a student monthly, changed its title in its last two years to *Hawk Wings*. The "little magazine" *statements*, which was founded in 1959 by Marvin Bell as a quarterly and now calls itself a "non-quarterly" because of its irregular publication, is devoted to modern poetry and art. It is a small quarto of 32 pages, the type handset and then printed along with the pictures by offset. State University of Iowa poetry and art "workshops" furnish most of its material.

The *Western Review*, which spent its last ten years (1949-1959) at Iowa City, was founded at the University of Utah in 1937 under the title *Intermountain Review of English and Speech*, by Ray B. West. Shortly it was renamed *Rocky Mountain Review*; and when West moved to the University of Kansas to join the English faculty



there, he brought his quarterly, by then a widely known "little magazine," with him as *Western Review*. When he came to Iowa as an associate in the Writers' Workshop, the *Western Review* was in his luggage. Six students who received degrees for writing done in the Workshop were published in the ten volumes of the *Western Review* while it was Iowa-based, but many distinguished off-campus authors were also contributors. Among them were Babette Deutsch, Karl Shapiro, Allen Tate, Kenneth Patchen, Kenneth Rexroth, and Harvey Swados. The magazine was never regional; the word *Western* in the title referred, said the editor, to mind rather than geography. After the issue for Spring, 1959, the *Western Review* was merged with *Contact*, of Sausalito, California.

*Sketch* has been published three times a year at Ames to present student writing (mostly fiction and verse) by students in English at Iowa State University. It has been consistently well edited and well printed. Looking further back in the history of this institution, we come upon a monthly issued by the literary societies of 1873-1896 called *Aurora*; it contained articles and verse by both students and faculty, as well as some local and alumni news.

The *Simpson Literary Quarterly* (1920-1922) printed some excellent material in its short career; Stuart Shaw, presently senior staff lecturer at



New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, was its first editor. After a long lapse, this magazine was followed by *Sequel*, begun by the Simpson College chapter of Sigma Tau Delta (an English studies honorary society that has been responsible for literary journals in many Midwestern colleges) and has been published since 1948 rather irregularly. It is now mainly an annual.

*Caravan*, begun in 1927 at Coe College, has had a similar history of irregularity and is now a Spring annual. Vernon Lichtenstein, the faculty adviser of the sponsoring Writers' Club for many years, tells how the depression of the 1930's forced resort to hand composition by six students, with some aid from the National Youth Administration; and thus three numbers were put out annually.

*Manuscript* was begun as a semiannual in 1938 at Morningside College. It changed title in 1956 to *Perspectives* and added to its student work in fiction, essays, and poetry, some fine offset reproductions of student art.

In Dubuque are published two of the older college literary magazines of the state — the *Spokesman*, begun in 1903 by students of Loras College as a quarterly; and the *Labarum* of Clarke College, begun in 1906 also as a quarterly but now a semiannual produced with great skill and artistry.

*College Chips*, of Luther College, has had a varied career dating all the way back to 1884. For



many years it was a literary monthly including some news. Sometimes it was printed partly in Norwegian, but since 1927 it has been wholly in English — and often irregular in issue.

*Castle Tales* was begun at Wartburg College with its issue for February, 1949, as a joint effort of the English, Music and Art Departments. At first it was a semiannual of quarto size and contained short stories, essays, poems, block prints, and occasionally some music. It changed title to *Castle* in 1958. It is now a handsome large octavo of 72 pages, issued annually. Block prints still appear, but the publication of music was abandoned several years ago. *Castle* is a student magazine, though an alumnus occasionally contributes.

Another annual is *Design*, of Iowa Wesleyan College. It was founded in 1954 by Louis A. Haselmayer, now chairman of the College's Division of the Humanities. It is sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta and contains fiction, poetry and essays by English Department students and faculty members.

The *Morningside Review* is an annual founded in 1962 as a repository of addresses and papers by distinguished visitors and faculty members at Morningside College.



## Some Special Categories

Special notice must be taken of certain Iowa magazines that refuse to be fitted neatly into any category in this series of articles or into any in the series that is to follow. We choose a few of them for attention here.

When *Life* made its sensational success as a picture magazine in 1936, the amazing welcome it received stimulated other enterprising publishers to enter the field of general pictorial journalism with their own offerings. About a score of such ventures were made, but the only successful one was the fortnightly *Look*, founded in Des Moines in 1937. *Look* was no mere imitation; it was packed with original ideas, lively, exciting, and worth reading. Gardner Cowles, Jr., known to Iowa friends as "Mike" when he was first associated with his father and brother in publishing the *Register* and *Tribune*, was the founder of *Look* and remains its editor and president of its publishing company. His magazine was immediately successful, soon gaining a million circulation and moving its main office to New York in 1940. Today it is one of the three great mass circulation magazines in the weekly-biweekly class.

A long forgotten but interesting periodical, im-



portant to the study of early Iowa culture, is the *Opera House Reporter*, founded by James S. Cox at Estherville. Cox was then manager of the Lough Opera House in that town. In those years such Houses had to take whatever shows came along with no chance of learning about them in advance; and as a result, some very bad ones sometimes appeared on the Lough stage. Cox gave public notice eventually that if an audience decided any show on his stage was really atrocious, it could walk out and get its money back. When this happened, Cox mailed out a circular to other opera house managers warning them against the bad show; they replied with letters about bad and good offerings and begged him to continue the circulars. Thus the *Opera House Reporter* (affectionately nicknamed "The Iowa Detective") was born in 1898. The very first numbered issue carried some advertisements: an impresario wanted "singing and dancing comedian, heavy man, leading lady; must be good dressers on and off stage"; "The Great Nina, electric picture and endurance dancer" was guaranteed — "Will forfeit \$500.00 if you can produce her equal."

L. C. Zelleno and George H. Bubb acquired the paper in 1915. It was then a 16-page quarto with some illustrations, published weekly at \$2 a year, including gossip and news of shows and show people; but still featuring "managers' reports,"



now arranged by towns and states throughout the Middle West. In 1917 they moved it to Des Moines. But the motion picture was already making great inroads upon the old opera house business. In the spring of 1921, an attempt was made to enlarge the journal's scope, and the title was changed to *Amusement Reporter*; but it did not quite last that year out.

A few music journals have been published in Iowa, as Frank Abbott's *Presto*, born in Cedar Rapids in 1884 but soon moved to Chicago; Wendell Heighton's *Western Musical Herald* (1906-1916), a Des Moines monthly with Minneapolis and Chicago editions; and P. C. Hayden's *School Music*, begun in Quincy, Illinois, and then moved to Keokuk, where its melodies ceased in 1915.

An admirable small-quarto monthly of thirty-two pages with self-cover called the *Book Marker* was published in Des Moines by Donald and Zoe Murphy, 1927-1929. Book reviews, brief critical pieces, and editorial chat composed a delightful bill of fare. But Donald became occupied with writing serials for farm papers, Zoe had a baby, and family budgets of time and money brought an end to a journal that not a few readers were sorry to see die.

In 1900-1901 H. S. Kneedler began in Boone a beautifully printed little magazine after the form, if not the style, of Hubbard's *Philistine*. It was called *The Optimist*, and it enlisted a number of



good contributors — such Iowans as Johnson Brigham and Lewis Worthington Smith; such diverse Easterners as Henry L. Mencken and Ella Wheeler Wilcox. But its optimism was short-lived.

A famous journal of its time was the *Analyst*, dedicated to "pure and applied mathematics," and published by J. E. Hendricks in Des Moines, 1873-1884. After leaving Iowa, it was issued as *Annals of Mathematics*, first at the University of Virginia, then at Harvard, and finally at Princeton, where it is still published. It has always been a bimonthly.

The *Dubuque Chess Journal* was a 76-page octavo published monthly through 1870-1878 by C. A. Brownson. It varied in title — sometimes simply — *Chess Journal*, sometimes *Brownson's Chess Journal*. Suspended for eight years, it was resumed 1886-1892.

Another specialized monthly was the *Western Penman*, begun in Cedar Rapids by A. N. Palmer in 1885. Professor Palmer's beautiful Spencerian writing fascinated boys and girls in many school-rooms. His little magazine of 16 quarto pages sold for five cents a copy. It was moved to New York in 1905 and published there as the *American Penman* until 1938. By that time fine penmanship was virtually a forgotten art.

We have left until the last one of the handsomest magazines ever issued in Iowa. This is the



# The Iowan

"a magazine of Iowa life"

October - November, 1952

Vol. 1, No. 1

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COVER: Lake Keomah at sunset. This popular recreation area east of Oskaloosa was photographed by Carl Turk with a Speed Graphic. Inside front cover: The flaming red oak, so typical of Iowa autumns was furnished by the Murphy Calendar Company of Red Oak. Inside back cover: Farm scene in northeast Iowa by L. Dale Ahern. Back Cover: Plates courtesy of State University of Iowa. Design by Dale Ballantyne.

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THIS is the first issue of a new magazine of Iowa life. I hope you like it.

The IOWAN represents not only four years of work and planning on our part, but also the efforts of scores of Iowans who have helped us through the difficult initial steps. We greatly appreciate their faith, and that of our present advertisers and charter subscribers. I am confident that Vol. I, No. I, of The IOWAN justifies the support that it has been given.

More than anything else, this magazine is an expression of our faith that Iowans are willing to support a quality magazine about themselves and their state. The proof of this belief is still to come. A great many people are betting against us. But we simply believe that if you give people a good magazine that they like, they'll support it.

While it may be somewhat unusual, this magazine is dedicated to one of its most faithful supporters: John Esden, a cousin who died from bulbar polio on the deadline day of this issue. He had just finished our Revolutionary War article. At the age of 21, John was one of the most gifted young men I have ever known. Already a profound student of history, economics and politics, he was also a good athlete and a talented musician.

As John, Iowa represents to me the challenge of unfulfilled promise. Our state has so many promising paths open to its future that we have still touched only a few of them. But we are in danger of depending on our own present bounty, stifling initiative and failing to find the right paths awaiting us. As John never rested in his pursuit of knowledge, so I hope Iowa never rests in its quest for a better future.

The IOWAN is not meant to be a private dream. Rather, I hope all Iowans will feel they are a part of an interesting and stimulating venture and join us in building a better magazine and a better Iowa.

David Archie



*Iowan*, of Shenandoah, a quarterly of 56 small-quarto pages plus cover devoted to Iowa personalities, industry, history, public affairs, travel, nature, sports, homes and gardens, art, and education. About two-thirds of it is devoted to pictures, with some eight pages usually in color. Begun as a bimonthly at only \$2 a year by David E. and Willard D. Archie in 1952, it lost money until, in 1958, it dropped all advertising and newsstand sales, increased the color, and doubled the price. It became a quarterly in 1961. Today it has nearly 10,000 circulation at a regular subscription price of \$7.50.